

Commonwealth of Virginia  
Virginia Department of Social Services  
Office of the Commissioner  
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Richmond, VA 23219

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**Commissioner's Memo No. 002**

**DATE:** October 3, 2007  
**TO:** Directors of Local Departments of Social Services  
**FROM:** Anthony Conyers Jr.

Directors,

Following are the topics contained in this Memorandum:

- [Budget Cuts](#)
- [Protective Investigations](#)
- [Consultative Services](#)
- [Reasonable Candidacy Guidelines](#)

**Budget Cuts**

On Monday, Governor Kaine released his plan to address the Commonwealth's \$641 million revenue shortfall. The announcement included state agency savings and spending reductions of \$300 million and additional steps he will take to address the revenue shortfall in the current budget period (FY08), which ends on June 30, 2008. The Governor's decisions, based on agency proposals to trim government spending from 5 to 7 percent, protect core services in public education, public safety and public health.

The unexpected decrease in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload resulted in the FY08 budget cuts having a less significant impact on our reductions with a few exceptions:

- At the state level, there will be a 5 percent cut in central administration totaling more than of \$1 million.
- There were no reductions to the 120 local departments of social services; however, the General Relief total allocation was reduced to FY07 spending levels. This should not impact local operation of the General Relief program as the original FY08 allocations were built on prior year spending.
- Where possible, TANF funds were substituted for general fund support for eligible activities.
- Additional 5 percent adjustments were made in budget lines for non-mandated programs.

The complete 2008 Budget Reduction Plan may be found at  
<http://www.governor.virginia.gov/TempContent/2008BudgetReductionPlan10-01-2007.pdf>  
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## **Protective Investigations**

Local departments of social services (LDSS) go through extraordinary lengths to ensure the safety of children and adults, who have suffered abuse, neglect and exploitation. Protecting these persons from further harm is a cornerstone of our mission. Any lapse in adhering to correct procedure during the investigation process could prevent those responsible for the abuse or neglect from being held fully accountable and may put the abused or neglected individuals and families once more in harm's way.

Thank you for your continued commitment to observing all technical and procedural requirements in investigating and presenting these cases. Cases have been reversed when these investigative procedures are not followed, even when the facts would have required upholding the decision. Through the careful and strict adherence to all investigation-related guidance, you and your workers ensure that the time and efforts dedicated to protecting our clients is never spent in vain.

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## **Consultative Services**

The policies and procedures that govern social services can be complex enough to require additional expertise and technical assistance. VDSS' responsibility is to work directly with you and your staff to provide this guidance upon necessity and request.

Private contractors may offer you similar consultative services; in so doing, they are operating independently of VDSS. Providing accurate and consistent technical assistance to all 120 local departments is VDSS' commitment. However, it would be impossible for us to ensure the accuracy of this information if a variety of private entities were the conduit for it. All requests for guidance must come directly from you as local departments, not a hired consultant.

In fact, direct contact between VDSS and a consultant working on behalf of one or more local departments may implicate both the State and Local Government Conflict of Interest Act and the Virginia Public Procurement Act. If VDSS were to share information with any particular vendor, this contractor could have an unfair competitive advantage over another.

Similarly, the training that the Department provides, free of charge, is done to ensure consistent implementation of policies and procedures that impact our workforce and clients. An independent contractor attending these trainings is obtaining access to information and practices that may provide him or her with a competitive advantage. Therefore, training is limited to employees of local departments.

The quality of VDSS' customer service and technical assistance is as important to me as it is to you and your staff. The Department will continue to strive to meet your needs. Should you choose to augment our guidance with that of a particular contractor, please be mindful that your arrangement will be entirely outside of the purview of VDSS.

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## **Reasonable Candidacy**

Title IV-E reimbursement is allowed for administrative activities performed on behalf of children deemed to be a reasonable candidate for foster care regardless of whether these children are actually placed into foster care and become recipients of Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments.

[Broadcast 4378](#) announced the issuance of the Reasonable Candidacy Program Manual and its documentation form. These provide detailed guidance on federal and state regulations and policies which allow VDSS to claim Title IV-E administrative cost reimbursements on behalf of LDSS for reasonable candidates for foster care. I hope that you will find the Manual an excellent resource for you and your child welfare workers.

Keeping our Title IV-E record in good standing will be a team effort. Please be reminded that only LDSS employees- not contracted persons- are authorized to make the determination of reasonable candidacy for foster care.

The administrative costs for children determined to be reasonable candidates are claimed through the Random Moment Sampling (RMS) observation process. RMS observations are used to document the specific program activity in which one of your workers is engaged at a randomly selected moment in time. For RMS refresher training, please see [Broadcast 4484](#).

For children who have been determined a reasonable candidate for foster care, VDSS, after applying the Title IV-E penetration rate, can claim 50 percent federal financial participation (FFP) for allowable administrative costs on behalf of your department.

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